

## **ABSTRACT**

**THESIS:** Exploring how one Virtual Heritage Application Connects Users to Historical Content: A User Experience Case Study

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Virtual heritage (VH) is the creation of historically significant objects and environments using 3D computer modeling and virtual reality. As VH has evolved, practitioners have started exploring how these computer-rendered environments could be used as tools to connect users to historical content and teach them about the past. The *Virtual Buffalo Bill's Wild West* (VBB) project is a prototype VH application that attempts to accomplish this goal by pairing a virtual reconstruction of the 1899 Wild West Show with a digital archive of historical source materials. This thesis is a user experience and usability study of VBB conducted in order to gauge to what extent users explore these materials and whether or not their experience with the project will encourage them to learn more about the subject. The results of this study should guide the further development of the VBB project as well as help determine whether the design of the VBB interactive archive feature is worth replicating in other VH projects.